

## **Nutritional Services/Meals on Wheels of Muskegon, Michigan**

The 12-week “Eat Better, Move More” program highlighted in the You Can! guidebook got seniors in Ottawa County, Michigan talking about nutrition more than any other program sponsored by the Nutritional Services organization. “The You Can! program really shows you how to do both,” said a staff member who implemented it. “The combination is critical to ongoing health.”

From July through September of 2004, Nutritional Services offered the program in three locations – one rural, and two urban. A total of 91 seniors ranging in age from 55 – 90 completed the program. Participants included seniors living alone and low-income seniors. Almost all reported some chronic diseases.

Program staff supplemented the You Can! guidebook with handouts from the “Recommended Sources” in the syllabus. Each senior was given a pedometer and instructed on its use. At the end of each week, program staff tabulated the total number of steps taken by each senior and gave him or her a new goal of 10 percent more steps for the following week. Walkers were also offered a “healthy salad” lunch and asked to record their fruit and vegetable intake on the “Tips and Tasks” sheet.

After completing the program, more than half of the participants recorded reduced blood pressure and a quarter experienced weight loss. Many continued their walking groups and even non-participating seniors at the centers became interested in the nutrition topics. Ninety-eight percent of the seniors who participated in the 12-week program said would recommend it to others.

Participants enjoyed the novelty of a pedometer and the ability to monitor their steps. Other motivations were the weekly reporting of success stories, meeting new people, forming walking groups, and sharing a healthy lunch.

Staff reported that the materials in the You Can! guidebook and the ease with which they could follow the program were key elements in their success. In the future, Nutritional Services hopes to conduct a 6-month follow up with the participants. They also hope to implement another 12-week program targeting minority groups, start a hiking/walking club, and develop an intergenerational program that combines nutrition and physical activity.